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## **Daschle, Dorgan Press to Ensure Rural America Benefits from New Telecommunications Rules**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Senators Tom Daschle (D-SD) and Byron Dorgan (D-ND) today pressed the nation's top telecommunications official to ensure that the needs of rural America are given "the highest priority" as plans to sell off parts of the broadcast spectrum are developed.

Daschle and Dorgan, along with seven other Senate Democrats, wrote to Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman William Kennard Wednesday, telling him that key parts of the spectrum are vitally important to ensuring that rural America can utilize new high-speed Internet services when they are developed and deployed. The FCC is currently developing the rules that will govern the auction of analog television spectrum that is to be returned to the government because of the transition to digital television. Those rules will greatly affect how new services will be brought to market.

"The rules that govern the auction of this part of the broadcast spectrum will determine whether companies are able to offer quality high-speed Internet to rural communities and other underserved areas," Daschle said. "I want to make sure the FCC understands my concern that rural America not find itself on the wrong side of the digital divide as important new products and services are deployed."

"This is another step in our effort to bring high-speed Internet access and other broadband applications to rural areas like North Dakota," Dorgan said. "This is particularly valuable spectrum for that purpose. That's why the rules for this auction are so crucial."

Since May, Daschle and Dorgan have led a coalition of Senators in an ongoing effort to create incentives for companies to bring high-speed Internet services to rural areas, to fund those incentives, and to ensure that national telecommunications policy meets the needs of rural America. The group has involved telecommunications experts and CEOs from major telecommunications companies in their efforts to help rural communities share in the benefits of quickly advancing technology.

The Senators wrote to Kennard: "we strongly encourage you to pay close attention to the needs of rural America as you make your spectrum auction decisions."

Joining Daschle and Dorgan on the letter to Kennard were Senators Bob Kerrey (NE), Jay Rockefeller (WV), Ted Kennedy (MA), Blanche Lincoln (AK), Max Baucus (MT), Ron Wyden (OR), and Paul Wellstone (MN).

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